7: Lineva B-5 (no date)1893 RF1 Great Russia RF1

B. POSSIDELOTCHNY SONGS.

(SOCIAL GATHERING.)

5. THE BIRCHWOOD SPLINTER.

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(*Lootchina.*)

My dear birchwood splinter,
Why don't you burn brightly?
Or, may be, you have not been in the oven?
I have been in the oven all last night,
But the wicked mother-in-law crept into the oven,
She crept into it to put a pan of water,
And drenched me all over with water.

This is one of the possidelotchny or social gathering songs, which are used at the *possidelky*, as explained on page 17.[1] The subject refers to the unhappy condition of a newly married young woman, living with her husband's family, whom the mother-in-law does not like and annoys out of spite. The birchwood splinter was used formerly by the peasants for lighting the house at nights. [606] [373]

A long block of birchwood was carefully split into long pieces, like laths, which were dried in the big oven over night; when a light was necessary, such a splint was stuck into an iron fork, which stood on the floor, and the lower end ignited. This splint, even when perfectly dry, caused a great deal of trouble, as it had to be attended to frequently, to snuff it and to renew it. When wet, it was nearly useless, of course, and to work by it was nearly impossible.

In the next piece an allusion is made to the ends of the splints which had been left over from previous nights, and which the careful housekeepers required to be burnt when there was chance to do so, *i. e.*, when there was no company and not so much light was needed.

The simple and plaintive melody alone is sufficient to depict the deep grief caused by the tyranny of the family over a defenceless member of it

1 [See cat. 116 —— Analyst]